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Names and naming in Afro-Caribbean cultures

Compares naming practices in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean and in Afro-American culture. Author asks how one is to interpret multiple identities and the parallel practice of taking over the names of the powerful as is common in both Afro-creole and Afro-American culture. He argues that Afro-creole culture is not a culture of resistance but an oppositional culture. It is a subaltern culture in part derived from a dominant culture which it can only oppose from within.

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INTRODUCTION

Followers of West Indian cricket will have noted the recent emergence of new fast-bowling “prospect” from St. Vincent named Nixon McLean – or, rather, Nixon Alexei McNamara McLean, for thus did his father, Vincent Truman MacArthur McLean, choose to style the first-born of his children, who would in course be joined by two further sons, Kissinger McLean and Reagan McLean, and a sister, Golda Meir McLean. When he was chosen to play for the West Indies “A” against England in Jamaica in January 1998, Nixon found himself playing alongside a local batsman called Wavell (or Wayvill) Hinds, just the latest in a long line of West Indian sportsmen to be named after this or that British general or politician: the Jamaican fast bowler Balfour Patrick Patterson, Gladstone Small of Barbados, Warwickshire, and England, the Winstons Benjamin and Davis, and the former Canadian-Jamaican sprinter Attlee Mabon, Clement also being a common first name amongst West Indian males born in the late 1940s, though I have yet to meet an Antiguan Aneurin or a Tobagonian Cripps.

Broadening somewhat the area of enquiry, the popularity of Hugh as a boy’s name in Jamaica in the mid 1950s was due to the popularity of the island’s last colonial governor Sir Hugh Foot, brother of Michael and father of Paul, and naming boys after colonial governors was a practice encountered throughout the British Caribbean: the “real name” of the well-known Trinidadian calypsonian and former school-teacher Mighty Chalkdust, or Chalky, is, for example, Hollis Liverpool, after the popular 1940s governor of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Claude Hollis. The first name Orde (after the Chindit leader Orde Wingate) was widely bestowed on West Indian boys born during the Second World War, and I assume that

the original diffusion of the still popular Lloyd is a tribute to the First World War leadership of David Lloyd George; I would also be prepared to bet that the first name of the greatest West Indian cricketer of all, Garfield Sobers, has some distant link with President James Abram Garfield of the United States, assassinated in 1881, exactly at the time when the first Barbadian migrants were arriving in America.

Finally, and still, inevitably, on the subject of cricket, there is the curious incident recalled by the England bowler Angus Fraser in a recent interview in *The Guardian*. Asked "What is the strangest fan mail you have received?," Fraser replied: "After we won the Test in Jamaica in 1990, a local resident sent me a copy of a birth certificate. His son had been named after all eleven players in the England team."¹ Just think of it: at this very moment, out there in Mandeville or May Pen, there is a nine- or ten-year-old Jamaican boy named Gooch Larkins Stewart Lamb Smith Hussein Capel Russell Small Fraser Malcolm (or perhaps Graham Wayne Alec Alan Robin Nasser David Jack Gladstone Angus Devon), and answering – who knows? – to the nickname "Goochie," "Judge," "Naz," or "Gladys,"² nicknames being, as we shall see, arguably even more important than given names in Afro-Caribbean male culture.

Of course, naming a child after an admired sportsman, or even a whole team, is not unknown in metropolitan cultures, and English readers of a certain age will dimly recall the Liverpool supporter who, after much scouting around for a compliant Catholic priest, had *his daughter* baptized after the full Liverpool team playing on the day she was born, beginning, if memory serves, Lawrence Milne Moran and ending Callaghan Heighway St. John. But this Liverpoolian headcase was at least naming his daughter after *his* team, whereas, almost forty years later, his Jamaican counterpart – and the difference is crucial – named his son after a team representing the former colonial "masters" who, moreover, had just *defeated* "his" team, for the first time in sixteen years, it is true, but wholly unexpectedly and by the decisive margin of nine wickets.

Furthermore, though little Goochie's Dad cannot have known this, there were good historical precedents for his exercise in onomastic overkill. In the 1920s and 1930s – and we have this on the authority of the great Learie Constantine, no less – it was common for West Indian mothers to name their new-born children after this or that member of the visiting MCC team: "When visiting MCC teams come to the West Indies, so great is the admiration for their prowess that hundreds of little black babies are named after them, sometimes using the white players' Christian

1 See *The Guardian*, February 13, 1998.

2 The nicknames of, respectively, Graham Gooch, Robin Smith, Nasser Hussein, and Gladstone Small.

names, but often using their whole name" (Constantine n.d.:78). It appears that the name Hammond, after the Gloucestershire and England all-rounder Walter Hammond, was especially popular, though this, I suspect, may be due to the fact that, notoriously, it was not just with his bat that the prolific Hammond scored heavily, and it has been plausibly conjectured that he contracted venereal disease in British Guiana while playing there for the MCC touring team of 1926 (Foot 1996:19-22 and 36-56). In explanation of his illness, Hammond would claim that he had strained his groin while in British Guiana and was then bitten by mosquitoes "in the same region," though it is not clear from my source whether by that he means B.G. or his groin: maybe both?

ONOMASTICS IN THE ANGLOPHONE WORLD

If I begin on a note of some levity, it is because thirty years of studying and visiting the Caribbean have convinced me that things are never so serious as when they're in jest and that, in the instance that concerns us, West Indians' *playing with names*, hilarious though its results often are to outsiders, is part and parcel of the "deep play" that is Afro-Caribbean culture in general.³ "Jamaicans enjoy naming things," David DeCamp (1960:15-23), one of the few anthropologists or linguists to have discussed the phenomenon, wrote, giving as typical sources of "onomastic delight" place names such as Corn-Puss Gap, Look Behind, and the incomparable Me No Sen' You No Come, as well as the names Jamaican cart-owners give to their means of livelihood, names that range from the party political ("Busta Special") and the racially self-assertive ("Kikuyu," "Kenyatta," "Marcus Garvey") or angry ("Black and Hungry") to the romantically fanciful ("Romeo," "Honey Love") or psychologically revealing ("Don't Gamble With Love," "Leave Me Alone").

Similar treasures have been collected by observers of collective taxis in Haiti, the famous *tap-taps* ("Effort et Volonté," "Enfant de la Veuve," "Quand Même," "Buscando la Vida," "L'Œil du Maître," and so on [Dillard, 1976:66], Martinican fishing boats ("Revanche à Mes Parents," "Le Jour est Arrivé," "La Jeunesse Belle Mussieu" [Price & Price 1966:157-60]), cars in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and other such items of everyday life which, it has been said, West Indians are almost congenitally loath to abandon to "the neutrality of anonymity" (Leiris 1950:1408).

But it is, of course, where people are concerned that the West Indian

3 The reference is, of course, to Clifford Geertz's classic essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1973).

preoccupation with, and flair for, naming is most in evidence, and it is conventional to trace back this preoccupation to slavery and to explain it as a consequence of, or as a self-conscious counter to, the alleged practice of stripping slaves of their African names on their arrival in the Caribbean and of “refitting” them and their creole-born children with European names of, it is said, a deliberately derisive or mock-heroic character: Cicero, Charlemagne, Cleopatra, or Juno. That such name-stripping and -substitution occurred is not to be doubted, and there is also clear evidence that it was sometimes creole slaves, and not their masters, who conferred European-style names on new African arrivants.⁴ Finally, of course, both creole and, in time, African-born slaves would, it is argued, “naturally” give European or European-derived names to their offspring.

Statistical evidence from the Worthy Park and Drax Hall Estates in Jamaica seems abundantly to demonstrate a gradual but comprehensive replacement of African by European names in the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus 26.3 percent of the slaves at Worthy Park in 1730 had Akan or other African-derived day-names but only an average of 4.8 percent were so named between 1783 and 1838 (Craton 1978:156) – this clearly reflects a drop in the proportion of “Saltwater” or African-born slaves, as well as the alleged effects of creolization – while at Drax Hall, over 50 percent of slaves (178 out of 345) had African names in 1735, compared with 24.6 percent (85 out of 325) in 1753 and 19.5 percent (66 out of 339) in 1780; by 1817, only 21 slaves out of 345 (6.1 percent) had African names, even though 64 (18.6 percent) were listed as being African-born (Armstrong 1990:37). These figures have led the historian Michael Craton to conclude, reasonably enough, that slaves names “provide perhaps the best proof of acculturation or creolization” and that “the gradual, and almost certainly voluntary, shift in the types of names – from a majority of African names to an increasing number of single English names, and to the first Christian names with surnames – provides a telling index of the decline of African influences and the increasing influence of Creole, Christian, and status norms” (Craton 1978:156).

Caution, however, is in order, for there is clear – and, for my purpose, crucial – evidence, in, for example Thomas Thistlewood’s plantation diary,⁵ that slaves commonly used two, three, or even more names

4 See, for example, the entry for May 25, 1754 in Thomas Thistlewood’s diary: “Mr. Cope sent an Ebo Negro man (a new Negro) he bought today. Our Negroes have named him Hector. I put him to live with London” (Hall 1989:63).

5 See, for example, the entry of December 7, 1761 in which Thistlewood gives the “country names” of various of his slaves: Maria (Ogo), Pompey (Oworia), Will (Abasse). “Dick” is described as having the “country name Sawanno, alias Dowotronny,” clearly indicating the existence of multiple nomenclatures (Hall 1989:124-25).

according to context and circumstance: an African name when talking to Africans, for example, an “official” European-style name when addressing – or, rather, being addressed by – Massa or Busha, and a further name or nickname, European in form but indigenous in substance, when speaking to other creole slaves, though even this formulation probably simplifies a much more complex reality. Moreover, even though African-derived day-names were a rarity in Jamaica after 1800 (De Camp 1967), many of them survived un- or semi-detected beneath a European onomastic veneer: Cudjoe as Joe, Kofi as Coffee or Cuffee, Quaco as Jacko, Abba as Abby, Phibbah as Phoebe, and so on (Craton 1978:157), and it is entirely possible, for example, that, under the apparently 100 percent European name Phoebe Cooper, Akan Phibbah’s Cubah, Cubah daughter of Phibbah, lurks cryptonymically (Dillard 1976:17).

As for the European-style names given to, or voluntarily assumed by, slaves both African and creole, these are in general far more commonplace than the Hannibals and Boadiceas of legend. To be sure, the Worthy Park registers contain their share of “Pompeys,” “Pitts,” and “Hercules” (Craton 1978:157) (as well as “Strumpets” and “Ravefaces”), but most of the names conferred by the masters, or adopted by slaves on their own initiative, are straightforward enough, with “Mary,” “Jim,” “Dick,” “Polly,” and the like being overwhelmingly preponderant, either used on their own or reinforced with some rough-and-ready indication of the bearer’s origin (“Congo Jack”), color (“Mulatto Kitty”), position (“Driver Sam”), or parentage (“Abba’s Mary,” “Nancy’s Jane”). Finally, to repeat, there is evidence, from Worthy Park and elsewhere, even prior to Christianization, of intermittent changes of name, suggesting that a significant proportion of slaves enjoyed dual or even multiple identities in a way, presumably, that could not but exasperate and confuse their owners.

With the spread of missionary activity, first black then white, amongst slaves from the 1780s onwards, the situation became considerably more complex, for while some slaves resisted baptism and the change or modification of name that it often implied, there seems little doubt that the overwhelming majority not only accepted but actively sought it, though not always for the religious – in the narrow, “European,” sense of the word – reasons that the missionaries hoped for. The account in the anonymous Jamaican novel *Marly* of 1828 maintains that the slaves believed that “the African deity Obi had no power over those who were baptized” and that it was in order to ensure “dat Obeah no more him kill” that, as “Trajan” puts it, “eberry one neger want to be kirstened in de buckra fashion.” There follows what is plainly an eye-witness account of

a mass baptism of slaves which, so crucial are the insights it affords, needs to be cited in full:

The negroes, on being informed that they were to be baptized, were quite elated and in high spirits at the idea of becoming Christians like the buckras, and by the time the parson came upon the estate, Christian names and surnames, were fixed for each of the people. In general, they took the surname of the proprietor, attorney, or those of the white people on the property, in place of their former African or heathen appellations; their first names, however, being the ones in common use as those they were most familiar with; their new or Christian ones, being reserved as a resource for uncommon occasions, if such should ever happen. Many days did not elapse, before the clergyman sent notice of the time when he would attend, and the negroes were desired to attire themselves in their best apparel, and to be all in readiness on the appointed day. Accordingly, when the parson made his appearance, the people were assembled and placed in rows, when the clergyman made them members of the Christian church, after admonishing them to be good, and to beware and not steal, as also some other matters, which went in at the one ear, but unfortunately, as most of the people said, escaped instantaneously out by the other. The ceremony was performed in the course of a short time, in the presence of the white people on the estate, and a large party of overseers from the adjoining properties. After dinner, to which the clergyman waited, a negro ball succeeded, which finished the day, and seemed to afford the negroes rather more pleasure than the baptism; few, if any of them, being able to comprehend the greatness of the virtue in a little water, and the clergyman's "speakee" a little over them. And next morning, jaded and fatigued with the night's dissipation, their former routine of labour commenced. They felt proud, however, of being Christians, like the buckras, in place of being heathens, as the preceding day had seen them; but a considerable time elapsed, before they could recollect their new names, which was a source of no small vexation to the book-keepers, who were considerably teased, with the frequent enquiries which they made, to tell them their Christian names. (Anon. 1828:130-33)

The evidence from Worthy Park confirms the general validity of "Marly"'s obviously ethnocentric account. While some slaves merely added a surname to their old name on baptism, comical "Big Amelia," for example, duly becoming respectable Amelia Parker, others underwent a complete onomastic metamorphosis: "Mulatto Kitty" becomes Mary Ellis, "Sue's David" William Lord, "Hannibal" Peter Hammel, "Adam" William Parker, "Duncan" John Vinnicombe, "Sambo Sally" Sarah Richards, and so on. Surnames, as "Marly" says, were usually taken from those of plantation whites, overseers, and senior book-keepers as well as the

commonly absentee owners, though missionaries' surnames also did service, whence the diffusion of Knibb, for example, in Jamaica.⁶

Thus it was, in Craton's words (1978:157), that a majority of slaves in the British West Indies "entered freedom in 1838 with two names, like those who were already free." Paradoxically, though, their "free names" were commonly those of their erstwhile owners and masters (or of their surrogates), an anthroponymic corpus which survives to this day and which, when allowance is made for subsequent inter-island migration and for the fact that many owners had properties and slaves in more than one colony, still offers a fairly reliable guide to national origins and identities: the Hindses, Hibberts, Beckfords, Campbells, Camerons, and McMorrises of Jamaica, the Marshalls, Greenidges, and Holders of Barbados, the Gिल्keses of Guyana, Warners of Trinidad, Shillingfords of Dominica, and so on.

The naming practices current in the British West Indian colonies have clear parallels in North American slavery, though there are certain differences that require explanation. As in the Caribbean, the unnamings and renaming of new arrivants from Africa was, for their masters, an integral part of the act of taking possession, as one planter, the aptly nicknamed Robert "King" Carter of Chesapeake Bay recognized in 1727: "I name'd them here & by their names we can always know what sizes they are of & I am sure we repeated them so often to them that everyone knew their names & would readily answer to them" (Berlin 1998:112). The names imposed on newly purchased slaves sometimes alluded to their real or supposed origins ("Senegal," "Santome," "Angola"), and it is interesting to note, in the very earliest stages of North American slavery, the presence of a "Carla Criole," a "Jan Creoli," and a "Christoffel Crioll" (Berlin 1998:50). As in the islands, masters bestowed classical or literary names – Hercules, Cato, Claudius, Othello – as what Ira Berlin (1998:95) calls "a kind of cosmic jest: the more insignificant the person in the eyes of the planters, the greater the name." Slaves, by definition, were refused surnames because surnames betokened generational continuity and adulthood, both of which owners were anxious to deny. African names, particularly day names, survived, though decreasingly, and the latter lost the precise temporal significance that they had in the parent African cultures; similarly, "Sambo," meaning second son, came to be given indifferently to any male child. When the practice was adapted to English calendar names, a further loss of precision ensued,

6 The reference is to "Knibb the Notorious," one of the most active white missionaries in pre-emancipation Jamaica whose anti-slavery zeal was bitterly resented by the planters.

and a slave named "January" or "Easter" could well have been born in July (Kolchin 1995:45).

Paradoxically, however, the very existence of such solecisms as a July-born "January" indicates that some slaves, at least, were co-creators, or even sole creators, of their names, and not merely passive recipients of whatever label their masters chose to assign them. Some African-born slaves refused point blank to accept the new names in question: "When Quasho Quando's owner attempted to rename him Julius Caesar, Quando simply refused to accept the new identifier – despite his owner's threats, promises, and additional threats" (Berlin 1998:188). Others may not have objected to the classical or literary names with which they had been tricked out. As non-readers of Livy with a living mythology other than Greek, they would not, presumably, have been aware of the derogatory inappropriateness of names such as Hercules or Cato, both of which may have been sufficiently close to African names or other words actually to reinforce, rather than undermine, their sense of themselves; as Eugene Genovese points out (1975:449), *heke* means "large wild animal" in Mende. Furthermore, according to one former slave, Robert Smalls, speaking in 1863, slaves did use what he calls "titles," meaning surnames, amongst themselves, though, significantly and wisely given all that the possession of a surname implied, "before their masters they do not speak of their titles at all" (Kolchin 1995:140). What these secret surnames consisted of is unclear, but the likelihood is that they were not those of their masters. North American slaves appear to have avoided giving children their masters' first names (Kolchin 1995:46), either through hostility or through fear of violating some fundamental taboo, and it is significant in this respect that "some 90 percent of 580 manumitted slaves drawn from a sample of 2,000 whose names were listed in New York's manumission records between 1701 and 1831 had names different from their manumitters" (Berlin 1998:449).

Where former West Indian slaves were often eager, as we have seen, to arrogate the power of their former owner by adopting his or her name, their North American counterparts seem to have opted, where possible, for completely new (but still basically American-style) names. The evidence, however, is confused and far from consistent. Some black soldiers fighting in the Fourth Connecticut Regiment during the American Civil War took highly symbolic surnames like "Freeman," "Newman," and "Liberty," though the first names that accompanied them – "Pomp," "Cuff," and "Primis" in the examples cited by Berlin – remain typical "slave names." Berlin also notes (1998:240) "the singular absence of the names of the great slave-holding families" amongst the names of newly emancipated North American slaves, in very marked contrast to what we have seen to

be the West Indian practice. On the other hand, Genovese (1975:449) cites the testimony of one Texan ex-slave who deliberately went against the otherwise standard practice (as he saw it) of freed men and women taking over the name of their former owners:

The master's name was usually adopted by a slave after he was set free. This was done more because it was the logical thing to do and the easiest way to be identified than it was through affection for the master. Also, the government seemed to be in a almighty hurry to have us get names. We had to register as someone, so we could be citizens. Well, I got to thinking about all us slaves that was going to take the name Fitzpatrick. I made up my mind I'd find me a different one. One of my grandfathers in Africa was called Jeaceo, and so I decided to be Jackson.

Perhaps Martin Jackson was afraid that there would simply be too many Fitzpatricks for him to have a distinctive identity, whereas ex-slaves from smaller units of production – the North American norm – would have no such fears in taking over the name of their ex-owners. One manumitted slave cited by Berlin (1998:321) petitioned the court to change his first name to “save him and his children from degradation and contempt which the minds of some do and will attach to the name of April,” but was equally anxious to preserve his ex-master's name Ellison (which, as Berlin says, may also have been that of his father) not only, as he puts it, as a “mark of gratitude and respect” but, more pragmatically, because it would “greatly advance his interest as a tradesman.”

After emancipation, the naming practices of African-Americans appear to have gone through three main phases, though the differences between these should not be exaggerated, nor should it be forgotten that the names borne, at any one time, by the majority of African-Americans do not distinguish them in any immediate and obvious way from the rest of the population. In the three or four decades following emancipation, African-Americans seem to have systematically avoided, as the example of “April” Ellison suggests, any forenames that might advertise their owners' racial identity, preferring, for both ideological and prudential reasons, to identify themselves publicly as “American” rather than “black” and using a variety of intra-community nicknames to signal their separate identity amongst themselves. Then, perhaps coinciding with the great movement northwards after 1910, some African-Americans began to identify themselves obliquely as “black” through a series of naming practices which, though not confined to African-Americans, seem to have enjoyed a particular currency amongst them and which, in the absence of any systematic study known to me, I will illustrate through the names of leading black American musicians, all of them men, the question of female names requiring separate study.

Thus, as in the Caribbean, the first names and surnames of successful white public figures, principally politicians, were adopted as forenames by black Americans presumably for their exemplary value. Theodore Roosevelt (president 1901-09) proved particularly popular with black parents (whence, in the jazz world, Theodore Shaw "Teddy" Wilson, Theodore Leroy "Teddy" Bunn, Theodore Walters "Sonny" Rollins, plus the blues singer Roosevelt Sykes), and there are numerous similar examples: Miles Dewey Davis (the third in his family to be so named, presumably after Thomas Dewey), Taft Jordan, Wendell Marshall (after Oliver Wendell Holmes), McKinley Howard "Kenny" Dorham (after the assassinated President William McKinley plus, indirectly, General Oliver Otis Howard, chairman of the post-Civil War Freedman's Bureau, after whom Howard University had already been named), and so on. Some parents combined "black" and "white" names, whence the tenor saxophonist Theodore Marcus "Teddy" Edwards and the trombonist Curtis Du Bois Fuller, the Curtis possibly coming from Charles Curtis, the Republican Vice-President from 1929 to 1933; there were also numerous Bookers (Booker T. Ervin Snr. and Jnr., Booker Little).

The practice of using initials as forenames is also to be noted (J.C. Higginbotham, J.J. Johnson), the purpose apparently being to obviate all possibility of derogatory abbreviation, as is the kind of onomastic inventiveness to which we owe the *trouvailles* of Ornette Coleman and Thelonious Sphere Monk. It goes without saying that, amongst the musicians themselves, the nickname rather than the given name would be the standard form of address, and the formally named Charles Christopher Parker and John Birks Gillespie would automatically become the Bird and Dizzy of everyday exchange, whence the plethora of "Beans," "Bubbers," "Rabbits," "Cooties," "Tricky Sams," "Hot Lips's," and "Little Jazz's" and the like which constitute one of the minor pleasures of the music.

Beginning in the 1940s, many black jazz musicians adopted the black Muslim practice of Islamicizing or part Islamicizing their names, with the saxophonist Curtis Porter reinventing himself as Shafi Hadi, the flutist William Evans as Yusef Lateef, and the baritone saxophonist Edmund Gregory as Sahib Shihab, pending the later emergence of the multi-instrumental genius Rahsaan Roland Kirk; the tenor saxophonist Farrell Sanders deftly "Africanized" himself into Pharaoh. None of these changes, however, could match the exemplary metamorphosis of Cassius Marcellus Clay (after the prominent nineteenth-century abolitionist of that name) into Mohammad Ali in the early 1960s. From identity concealed to identity alluded to and thence to identity publicly proclaimed: no doubt the next generation of jazz musicians will contain its due proportion of

Markils, Wakils, Koranjas, and Kalonjis, and, it is to be hoped, more than a few La Quishas, Tashinas, Dreesanas, Kitishas, Tawanas, and Zakiyas, as African-Americans more and more escape the grid of traditional American anthroponymy.

ONOMASTICS IN THE FRANCOPHONE CARIBBEAN

I want now to turn my attention to the French-speaking West Indies, first to colonial Saint-Domingue and then to the onomastic revolution that took place in Martinique after the emancipation of its slaves in 1848. In Catholic Saint-Domingue there had never been, as there frequently was in Protestant Jamaica, any marked resistance by planters to the evangelization and baptism of their slaves; indeed the infamous *Code Noir* of 1685 made formal Christianization obligatory, though in the eighteenth century a combination of religious latitudinarianism and intensified exploitation meant that the requirement was by no means universally put into effect. Instead, as in Jamaica, we find the pressure for baptism coming from the slaves themselves, first from the creoles who, according to Moreau de Saint-Méry's exceptionally well-informed *Description de la partie française de l'île de Saint-Domingue* of 1797, "lay claim, by dint of the baptism they have received, to a great superiority over all the Negroes arriving from Africa," and then from the Africans themselves who, according to the same source, "are extremely eager to get themselves baptized." The reasons given by Moreau for this eagerness are particularly interesting:

At certain periods of the year, such as Easter and Whit Saturdays, when adults are baptized, the [African] Negroes make their way to church, and all too often without any preparation, and with no other concern than to obtain for themselves a godfather [*parrain*] and godmother [*marraine*], who are sometimes assigned to them on the spot, they receive the first Christian sacrament, and so protect themselves against the insult addressed to the non-baptized; even though the creole Negroes still call them "baptized standing up" [*baptisés debout*].

"The respect for Negroes have for their godfather and godmother," Moreau continues, "is pushed so far that it exceeds that which they have for their mother and father," providing the further intelligence that "the Negroes address each other as *brothers* and *sisters* when they have a godfather or godmother in common" (Moreau de Saint-Méry 1958, I:55).

All this confirms what is amply attested throughout the Caribbean, namely the importance slaves everywhere attached to all forms of kinship, whether consanguineous or fictive, particularly that embodied in the term

“shipmate” – *bâtiment* in French creole – used of each other by slaves who had made the Middle Passage together on the same vessel. “Shipmate,” wrote Alexander Stewart of slaves in Jamaica, seems “synonymous in their view with brother or sister,” while James Kelly’s *Voyage to Jamaica* of 1838 tells us that “shipmate is the dearest word and bond of affectionate among the Africans ... they look upon each other’s children mutually as their own” (Patterson 1967:150). Small wonder, then, that children addressed their parents’ shipmates as “uncle” and “aunt” and that, according to some accounts, sexual intercourse between shipmates was prohibited as incestuous; even today, the terms “mâti” and “sippi” or “sibi” (< “shippi”) are used in Suriname to designate an especially intense kind of dyadic relationship between two biologically unrelated individuals (Mintz & Price 1992:44).

In this perspective, baptism, and the change or modification of name it entailed, represented in the first instance a means of broadening and strengthening the slave’s network of non-biological kin, an essential prerequisite for survival on the plantation. It further represented an authentic *rite de passage*, not so much from heathendom into Christendom, as from African-ness into West Indian-ness; in a word, as lived by the slaves, baptism into the White Man’s religion enacted and figured not their Europeanization, but rather their effective *creolization*; the name of the Other is less an obliteration or alienation, than it is a transmutation or renewal, of identity.

In Martinique following the formal emancipation of slaves in the French Empire on April 27, 1848, a government decree of May 7 announced measures for the setting up of the eloquently named *registres d’individualité* whose task was both to enumerate the newly liberated black population and “to confer names on individuals and families,” in conformity with the principles laid down in an earlier decree of 1836 which had allowed free people of color to bear surnames provided that these were not of any existing family “unless express permission is given in writing by all members of that family.”⁷ The purpose of this proviso was obvious to everyone: to prevent the situation that had arisen in the British Caribbean when first free people of color and then freed slaves had routinely, and without apparent opposition, taken over the names of their ex-owners or other whites, so blurring any obvious onomastic differences between “black” and “white,” differences that the *békés* of Martinique, partly because they were a resident rather than an absentee owner-class, were desperate at all costs to maintain. Bearers, in more cases than not, of aristocratic patronyms such as de Lucy de Fossarieu, Gallet de Saint-Aurin,

7 The present paragraph largely repeats Burton 1994:63-66, where full references may be found.

Cassius de Linval, and de Laguerrigue de Survilliers, the *békés* had resolutely refused to confer their family names on the illegitimate children they had fathered with slave or free colored women; even today it is extremely unusual for a colored Martinican to bear the surname of one of the great *béké* clans, with the result that names in the French overseas departments still function effectively as signifiers of race.

This situation can be traced back directly to 1848 when the *registres d'individualité*, staffed by local and metropolitan whites, were charged with the task of actually inventing surnames for something like 150,000 newly freed blacks who, theoretically, could reject the name the registrars assigned them, but who in practice accepted without question. It was an extraordinary situation and one which, predictably, produced often extraordinary results. On each plantation, the freed slaves filed past a table to receive names dreamed up on the spur of the moment by one or two whites, whose powers of onomastic inventiveness were sorely tested as the process dragged on and on.

Classical literature and history, both ancient and modern, were an obvious resource, whence the profusion of Achéens, Timoléons, Philoctetes, and Césaires in contemporary Martinique. Moral qualities – Constant, Confiant – might serve, and as another alternative, the registrars simply used the ex-slave's existing first name as the basis for the surname, whence the doublets Louis Louison, Flore Florel, Solange Solan, and the like. Place names could obviously be used (Adelaïde Ansegrand, Adelaïde from Grand Anse), and first names could be conjoined with mothers' first names to produce Louis Rosine, Louis son of Rosine, or Mélina Agrippine, Mélina daughter of Agrippine, with the result that many Martinican surnames are historically matronyms; as a further refinement, the first names of both mother and grandmothers could be used, the likely origins of such well-known Martinican surnames as Rose-Rosette, Marie-Jeanne, and Marie-Rose.

But, with 150,000 ex-slaves to enumerate and name, the registrars were soon driven to desperate onomastic measures, notable amongst which is the recourse to anagrams: Compère becomes Erepmoc, Marcel is jumbled to form Celmar or Celma, and Félix is twisted into Lixfé, all of these being familiar surnames in Martinique to this day. There is even – though this may be apocryphal, like the two Martinican girls, born respectively on the Fête de l'Apocalypse and the Fête Nationale, who were allegedly baptized Apocal and Fetnat – a case when, confronted by yet another ex-slave to name, one exhausted and exasperated registrar exclaimed "Ah, j'en ai assez!," his colleague duly wrote in the register, and the ex-slave departed with the name Jean Néacé... Martinicans themselves often laugh at their improbable gamut of names, wrongly, I think, for I see them

as a triumph of *créolité*. Having, so to speak, been issued with a series of arbitrary state-inspired signifiers, Martinicans have, historically, combined them, refined them, and added to them with extraordinary flair, taking over the officials' inventions, reinvesting and creolizing them, to produce such onomastic miracles as – I mention just people I have known, or known of – Irénée Suréna, Juvénal Linval, and, incomparably, Nestor Déluge.

One final observation on Martinican first names: the profusion, more in evidence during the colonial period than in the present, of names based on "France," Françoise, Francine, Francette, Marie-France, and, of course, France itself for women, François, Francis, and Frantz for men. Like most Anglophones, I imagine, I had always thought and spoken of Frantz (as in German Franz) Fanon, though I was mildly curious as to why his parents should have given him such a Teutonic-sounding Christian name in the immediate aftermath of the *Grande Guerre* in which so many Martinicans had fought and died. Then I met a schoolfriend of Fanon, and as soon as he said "Frantz [as in France] disait que ...," I realized, of course, that the name was not Teutonic-sounding at all but that the leading theorist of colonialism and anti-colonialism had the name of the colonizer inscribed in his own, almost as unerasable as the master's brand inscribed upon the slave. The discovery made me think very differently of the author of *Peau noire, masques blancs*.

NICKNAMES IN AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE

Names, given names and surnames alike, are one thing in the Caribbean, nicknames quite another, and the Martinican novelist Patrick Chamoiseau (1990:28) – himself the bearer of the fine sobriquet Oiseau de Cham, or Bird of Ham, as in Ham the mythically black son of Noah – has written revealingly of what he calls "the creole art of the nickname." The anthropologist Frank Manning has also commented on the "truly striking" prevalence of nicknames amongst Afro-Caribbean males, listing the following amongst the Bermudan men he has known: Froggie, Cracker, Kingfisher, Peter Rabbit, Spider, Bird, Workey, Salt and Pepper, Smokey, Brick Dust, Bouncer, Buggywhip, Tuppence, Stagolee, Fleas, Peacemaker, and Comical. Such is the currency of nicknames in Bermuda that many men appear in the local telephone directory only under their nickname: Nappy, Centipede, Squeaky, Captain Tired, Grasshopper, Pee Wee, Chummy, Icewater, Jimbo, and so on. Manning sees nicknames as an integral part of the play culture of West Indian males on which he and other anthropologists have written so extensively. Given the relative paucity of the number of surnames, in Bermuda as in the ex-British Caribbean, nicknames, he says, perform an important social function as

“symbolic individuators” but, over and above this practical role, they confer a mock heroic identity on their bearers as they engage in the day-to-day dramatic performance and contest that is Afro-Caribbean male culture as it plays itself out between rum-shop, barber’s shop, betting shop, and street corner. Men bear “mock aristocratic titles or epithets implying exaggerated masculine prowess” so that nickname usage becomes part and parcel of “the jocular, agonistic exchange of verbal insults” – the Afro-Caribbean counterpart of African-American “rapping” or “the dozens” – in which “good talkers demonstrate their fluency and wit.” Significantly, though women sometimes have nicknames, these are not nearly as common, and above all not nearly as self-dramatizing, as those sported by men, in keeping with what is widely seen as the respectability orientation of female Afro-Caribbean culture. It is significant, too, that when men return, as many of them in later life do, to active church membership, they abandon their nicknames and are mortified when unredeemed former rum-shop companions persist in addressing them as such: nicknames are to reputation what the name is to respectability.⁸

For his part, Chamoiseau (1988:98) distinguishes between the Martinican male’s official “town-hall name” (*nom de mairie*) and his unofficial “hill name” (*nom des mornes*), implying that the nickname is a kind of onomastic *marronnage*, away from the plantation of bureaucratically regulated existence and into an equivalent of the wooded and mountainous fastnesses where runaway slaves established their communities. But the nickname is less a phenomenon of *grand* than of *petit marronnage*, permitting not so much a total and permanent withdrawal from the plantation as a multiplication of identities, and a limited, ambivalent freedom, on its fringes or even within it. But just as the *petit marron* ended up back on the plantation, either as a result of recapture or of hunger or sheer want of company, so the nickname-bearing *driveur* – the creole word for drifter or hustler, from the French *dériver*, to drift – remains ultimately subject to the law of the *mairie*, where his “real name” is on record for purposes, say, of conscription or of maintenance costs for the various children he has fathered in the course of his *drive*. “Je suis esclave de mon baptême,” wrote Rimbaud in *Une saison en enfer* (1873), I am the slave of my birthright: so too the maroon, and his partial modern equivalent the *driveur*, remains at the last, despite all their onomastic manoeuvrings, in bondage to the Name that first Master, then *re-*

8 For all information and quotations, see Manning 1974:123-32. Interestingly, Bermudan males are also known by their car number plates, but this style of appellation belongs firmly to the respectability system.

gistre d'individualité, and then finally *mairie* have successively imposed upon them.⁹

Yet notwithstanding the ultimate hegemony of the Name, nicknames and their close relatives, mock-heroic and mock-aristocratic titles, play – and I mean *play* – a vital role in the oppositional culture of the black West Indian male and, more broadly, in Afro-American cultures as a whole. The use of the allonym-title is everywhere present: in the countless Mighty Xs and Lord Ys of Trinidadian calypso, as well as in the rather less numerous Ranking Zs of the Jamaican musical scene when reggae and ragga performers adopt as a matter of course the names of American gangsters and film-stars or create *noms de guerre* of their own to signal their identity and prowess: Dillinger, Clint Eastwood, U-Roy, I-Roy, Yellowman, Ninja Man, Super Cyat, and, not to be outdone by the men, Lady Junie and Lady G.

Consider, too, the sobriquets of the legendary stickfighters of nineteenth-century Trinidad (Cobra, Tiny Satan, Toto, Cutaway Rimbeau, and Mungo the Dentist – the last so named for his skill at “fixing” the teeth of opponents) or, a hundred years and a thousand miles distant, the so-called “Dons” of the contemporary Jamaican underworld: Winston “Burry Boy” Blake, Everald “Run Joe” Carby, Mark Anthony “Jah T” Coke, Keith “Trinity” Gardner, and, combining the first name of a great East-West Indian batsman and the surname of a legendary England stalwart, Rohan Barrington “Yardie Boy” Barnett.¹⁰

The use of the title-cum-nickname is replicated elsewhere in the Afro-American world by American jazz musicians (Duke Ellington, Count Basie, King Oliver and the decidedly unknighly pianist “Sir” Charles Thompson), by any number of rappers (Dr Dre, Easy E, Dat Nigga Naz, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Flavor Flav), and by Brazilian footballers, first Afro-Brazilians and then players in general: Pele, Vava, Didi, Garrincha, Mueller, and the magnificent, unforgettable Socrates. Rastafarians, too, conform to the same logic of the allonym-title when they prefix their “Babylon name” with “Ras” or “Africanize” it by inversion, rearrangement of syllables, or dependent creation: Count Ossie, Prince Emmanuel, Prophet Gad, Bag-a-Wire, Headfull, Hy-a-whycuss, I-rice, I-mes, Dizzy-I-yonny, and so on.¹¹ A recent BBC documentary on West Indian domino players in Britain featured a star performer, splendid in mortar board and

9 For a further elaboration of these themes, see Burton 1993.

10 Names taken more or less at random from the index of Small 1995.

11 Count Ossie was a legendary Nyabinghi drummer and leader of the musical ensemble, the Mystical Revelations of Rastafari. Prince Emmanuel and Prophet God are the leaders of the Bobo and Twelve Tribes sects respectively, and the others are members of the Youth Black Faith movement of the 1940s and 1950s. I have taken their names more or less at random from the outstanding study by Homiak (1995).

academic gown, styling himself “Professor Lara,” and faculty and ex-faculty at the University of the West Indies will recall with admiration and affection – after all, as a young man he did clean bowl Constantine – the scholar christened Gladstone, known always as Charles and addressed routinely as Professor for so long that his colleagues were stunned when he was actually promoted to the Chair of Government he so richly deserved ...

CONCLUSION

How, then, to interpret these multiple identities and the parallel practice of taking over the names of the powerful, either, as we have seen, those of plantation whites or those other, usually external, whites (missionaries, British prime ministers) who were widely believed, both during and after slavery, to be on the side of the blacks in their struggle against the plantocracy? It would in the first instance be both legitimate and relevant to view both practices as a “retention” or “reinterpretation” of an African paradigm, there being, John S. Mbiti has written in his well-known study *African Religions and Philosophy*, “no stop to the giving of names in many African societies, so that a person can acquire a sizeable collection by the time he becomes an old man” (*sic*). Africans, Mbiti (1969:118-19) continues, without making it clear whether this was a pre-colonial as well as a colonial and post-colonial phenomenon, Africans “change names without any formalities about it, and a person may be ‘registered’ (for example in school, university and tax office) under one name today and another name ‘tomorrow’.”

Moreover, as much anthropological evidence attests, changes of name in African cultures do not merely signify but actively create changes in social and ontological status at the critical liminal stages of life, and the eagerness with which slaves evidently clamored for baptism suggests that they too retained a belief in the name as a source of sacred energy or power which coheres with and inheres in the person or thing which it does not so much designate as embody; the Saussurean principle of *l'arbitraire du signe* seems foreign to the African world-view in which, as Mbiti says (1969:119), “the name is the person,” and, as we shall see, a kind of magical nominalism seems to govern Afro-Caribbean naming practices as well. The “close identification of name and self” is also evident in the complex onomastics of the Saramaka Maroons of Suriname as analysed by Richard and Sally Price (1972); name, status, and identity are all bound up with each other, whence the extreme caution that needs to be exercised in all matters related to the naming and addressing of others particularly in the use of an individual’s *gaán ne* (“big name,”

“strong name,” “true name”) which is integral to that individual’s reputation. The Saramakas’ modulation of different types of names – *pikí ne* (“little names,” “nicknames”), *seketi ne* (“song names” or romantic nicknames), *Bakáa ne* (“Western names”), and so on – is paralleled, as the Prices themselves argue, amongst those Afro-Caribbean communities that remained within the ambit of plantation society, though here the experience of slavery is crucial.

The multiplication of names and identities formed an important part of the repertoire of oppositional tactics and tricks that the Jamaican critic Carolyn Cooper (1993:141), cleverly echoing Jamaican popular speech, has called slave “(h)ideology.” To give one example, recorded in James M. Phillippo’s *Jamaica, its Past and Present State* of 1843: a slave is in debt to another, is christened and says to his creditor, “Me is new man now; before me name Quashie, now me Thomas, derefo Thomas no pay Quashie debt” (Phillippo 1969:203). In this case, it is precisely, and not at all paradoxically, the abandonment of his African day-name that gives “Thomas” his new-found, if strictly relative, freedom: how better to demonstrate that, as so often, the African paradigm provides a base, but no more than a base, for the subsequent Afro-creole construct that cannot but be marked by, and respond to, the determining experience of slavery?

The practice of taking over the names of whites goes back to the very origins of the Afro-Caribbean experience when, in colony after colony, Maroon leaders commonly adopted the names of local white men – that of their ex-owner, or even of the colonial governor of the time – just as they commonly adopted European military uniforms, attaching, as I argue in my book *Afro-Creole*, a particular importance to hats as a symbol of both power and of freedom (see Burton 1997:245-46). “Hat belong to *me* – head belong to *Massa*,” said one canny slave, recorded by Phillippo (1969:202), when asked why he *took off*, rather than put on, his hat when it rained. To put on *Massa*’s hat is to put on his power; to take over in addition his name is to arrogate the free status, as well as the power, that is believed to be intrinsic to it, and this, rather than any spirit of ironic defiance, explains why, for example the seventeenth-century Martinican Maroon leader Francisque Fabulé took over the name of his ex-master and why, in Guadeloupe in 1726, the leaders of the Maroon uprising that year appropriated the names of the governor general, Général de Feuquières, and the military commander, the Comte de Moyencourt, pitted against them.¹²

So too the slaves and ex-slaves of the British Caribbean when, later, they actively and voluntarily sought to take over the names of their masters and ex-masters. To take the name of the freest and most powerful

12 See Burton 1997:232 (note 9), where full references are given.

white man most of them knew was, for slaves and ex-slaves, the most dramatic way of asserting and displaying their own freedom and power, and it was freedom and power, rather than beholdenness, gratitude or love, that they were signalling when, apparently uncoerced, they took over the names Beckles, Beckford, Brathwaite, or Best.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that large numbers of slaves *did* idealize their Massa, especially when, as was very often the case, he was not resident on the plantation, and compared him favorably to the whites they encountered on a day-to-day basis, believing him to be just, generous and, above all, *fatherly* in his attitude towards them: "My son! my love! my husband! my father!," "You no my massa, you my tata!" is how female slaves greeted M.G. "Monk" Lewis when he visited his plantation in Jamaica in 1816, holding up their children for his inspection and approval: "Look, Massa, look here! him nice lilly neger for Massa!"¹³ Of course, all kinds of reservations have to be made here, for Lewis's self-delusion and racial condescension, and for the women's evident self-interest in winning his sympathy and support in their on-going struggle with overseers and other subordinate whites. I see no reason, however, to doubt the intensity and genuineness of their pleasure in seeing "their" Massa whose appearance amongst them, from the "England" all of them have heard of but none of them seen, is little less than a theophany. For slaves to take over the name of this demi-god – and Lewis must be among the twenty or thirty commonest surnames in Jamaica – was, on the one hand, symbolically to take over his power and to signal that they were as free and as worthy as he, and, on the other, to acknowledge, and to force *him* to acknowledge, the existence of a continuing bond between them, an important prudential consideration, especially when, as is now clear, few slaves *initially* intended to leave "their" plantations when they obtained their "full free."¹⁴

It was, to return to the earlier equestrian image, to cease to be ridden or riderless and to become a rider oneself, and there can be few moments in West Indian history more eloquent than that which occurred in the course of the great slave uprising of 1831-32 in Jamaica when, in the words of one rebel, "I was sitting on the steps of the Great House the day it was burnt ... I took up my Master's hat, and Alick took it out of my hand and went into the Stables and took Master's big mare – saddled it, and rode round the corner" (see Brathwaite 1977:47). Seven years later, if they survived Massa's retributive ire, Alick and friend would almost certainly have taken over his name after taking over his house, his hat, and his horse. In appropriating the *surname* of the Other, they symbolically

13 See Burton 1997:52-54 where, again, full references are supplied.

14 See the important article by Hall 1978.

reappropriated the selves that, by giving them a first name but withholding the dignity of a surname, Massa had stolen from their forebears. And, in the process, since they both now bore the same name, Alick and friend formally consecrated the bond of shipmate that bound them, as well as, more broadly, affirming their kinship, actual or fictive, with the other similarly named folk on the plantation. The name of the Other thus marks both community and selfhood, though, as we shall see, it does not, and cannot, take the newly named ex-slave and his descendants entirely outside of the Other's territory and power.

That Afro-Caribbeans, like their African forebears, do subscribe to a kind of magical nominalism whereby the substance of a person is believed to inhere in his or her name is suggested by the widespread pleasure taken in playing and juggling with syllables of names so that they not merely echo but actively embody the moral and other qualities of the person so designated. Thus Phillippo (1969:202) records the following revealing statement by a slave: "Wilberforce – dat good name for true; him good buckra; him want fo make we free; and if him can't get we free no oder way him *will by force*."¹⁵ To take over, therefore, the name Wilberforce, as many slaves did, was not only a mark of gratitude and a recognition of symbolic paternity¹⁶ but an appropriation of the very will and force embodied in the syllables that made up his name. Similar cases of characterization-by-syllabization might be seen in the way the name of the late Prime Minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley, was transfigured into "Man-lie" when he allegedly betrayed his supporters, and in the equally derogatory transmutation of Jamaica's first Prime Minister, Sir Alexander Bustamante into Bustamente, "men" in Rastafarian dreadtalk being the antithesis, or perversion, of "man" (see Chevannes 1994:103). With its endless troping and punning (as in "overstand" for "understand," and "downpression" for "oppression"), dreadtalk as a whole proceeds in much the same way, and its systematic substitution of the phoneme "I" for the vowels of "Babylonian" English (as in "I-men" for "Amen," "I-ses" for "praises," "I-tal" for "vital," etc.) may, like naming, be seen as a form of empowerment and en-selving by the Word: "I and I," reasons one grammatically-minded Rasta recorded by John Homiak (1995:172), "is a

15 The word that the slave in question uses for "White man," *buckra* (or *backra*), is itself exceptionally eloquent in its etymology, being derived from Efik *mbakara* < *mba* = "all, the whole" + *kara*, "to encompass, master, understand." Etymologically, in other words, the buckra is "he who encompasses, masters and understands all things" (see Allsopp 1996:61).

16 Thus Thomas Harris, in the official report on the 1816 slave uprising in Barbados, stated that "he heard many negroes say they were to be free, and that Mr. Wilberforce was a father to me, and when they obtained their freedom their children would all be called after him" (quoted in Beckles 1987:108).

personal pronoun, in a maxilin [sic] gender, carrying a nominative case, having a subject of its own [as opposed to the “accusative” or “objectified” “me” of standard Jamaican patwa]. So I-n-I use ‘I’ as de first letter of any sound dat I-and-I would be speaking,” to which a fellow reasoner, citing the Maccabee version of Exodus 3.14, illuminatingly replies, “Him said, ‘Tell dem dat I ART DE I AM dat send thee.’ So ‘I’ was de first fullness. It is *foundational*.”

When, therefore, a proud St. Vincentian father called his first born Nixon Alexei McNamara and when, twenty years or so later, another in Jamaica named his son after the entire for once victorious England cricket eleven, they were, did they but know it, acting in accordance with the most venerable West Indian onomastic tradition. So too were Mr and Mrs Louison of Grenada when they called their son Einstein – he grew up to be the none-too-bright Chief of Staff of the People’s Revolutionary Army under the island’s short-lived Marxist regime – though I make no comment on the Haitian parents who chose the name Himmler for one of their offspring. In each case, the name is the person and the person is POWER, and to take over the name is, logically, to take over the power. But, of course, logically is not *really*, and we come here to the paradox which, I believe, underlies the whole of Afro-creole culture in the Caribbean.

That culture is not, in my view, a culture of resistance but an oppositional culture, that is, to use a distinction made by Michel de Certeau (1980), it is a subaltern culture in part derived from a dominant culture that, by definition, it cannot get entirely outside of in order to *resist* it, but which it can only *oppose* from within by all the means of manoeuvre, manipulation, mimicry, and what the Greeks called *metis*,¹⁷ if I may be permitted a wholly unetymological leap, is both the glory and the bane of peoples characterized by a high degree of cultural and racial *métissage*. Thus creole culture is certainly *differentiated* from the dominant colonial culture it opposes, but it cannot, by dint of its very compositeness, be *different* from it, no more than the dominant culture, which is contaminated by the culture it dominates, can be separated entirely from it. Both dominant and dominated cultures are neither completely outside nor completely inside out of each other, they are intertangled and at odds, warring parasites that cannot do without each other, and the dominated culture, or sub-culture, is condemned by its very nature to operate on and within the terrain of the Other, just as Afro-Caribbean onomastics take place around and within the name of the Other.

To turn the name of the Other to the advantage of the self as,

17 See Detienne & Vernant (1991).

historically, West Indians have done time and again is not, ultimately, to get outside the Power of the Other, just as, to use a dyadic pairing that runs throughout Afro-Caribbean writing,¹⁸ Caliban does not in the end liberate himself from Prospero's magic by using Prospero's language to curse him. Or, reverting to the aspect of Afro-Caribbean oppositional culture with which I began, if Caliban beats Prospero over and over again at Prospero's "national game," this is scarcely "liberation cricket," as has been widely claimed and proclaimed,¹⁹ but an even more subtle form of domination and alienation, for the very pride and sense of himself that Caliban gains from his victory imprisons him all the more tightly in the colonial mind-set: even more than the slave and the colonial subject, the post-colonial Caliban in the ex-British West Indies seems to need his ex-Master in order to beat and humiliate him.

Opposition ultimately validates the Power it opposes, "the system" manipulated is "the system" – or, as Rastafarians call it, the "shitstem" – confirmed, and *metis* and manoeuvre, even as they permit the dominated individual and group to survive, also necessarily ensure the system's survival. What's in a name? In the case of West Indians, the whole *servitude* and *grandeur* of their history, its *splendeur* and *misère*, a history of violence and exploitation on the one side and of *marronnage*, mimicry, and *metis* on the other, endless resourcefulness playing with ever more Protean patterns of dominance, combined with an inability, at the last, to step, in the words of Aimé Césaire, greatest of all West Indian poets, *hors des jours étrangers*, out of alien days, into the domain of *la liberté libre* where both Caliban and Prospero, freed of their need for each other, might be "free indeed."

18 Amongst the considerable number of West Indian works using *The Tempest* as a paradigmatic text are George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and *Water Will Berries* (1971), and Aimé Césaire, *Une tempête* (1969).

19 As examples of this view of West Indian cricket, see most of the essays collected in Beckles & Stoddart (1994) and Beckles (1995). For a dissenting view, revising earlier judgments, see Burton 1997:177-86.

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